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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

# INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Poland/USSR/China

SUBJECT Fisherman's Comments on: Polish Exports to USSR and China, Circulation of Foreign Currency/Inventions/General Attitude of Workers/Counterfeit Sickness/Resistance Act-

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## Exports to USSR and China

"At any given time, in addition to colliers, there are at least two Soviet ships in Gdynia harbour, loading grain, meat, tinned food etc. for transport to the USSR. Coal exports to the USSR are carried on ships of the Liberty type (8000 tons) or of the Poznan type (4000 tons). Two such ships leave Gdynia weekly. Every week, too, two of 300 tons each are loaded with coal and then hauled away by a large tug (about the size of the Polish Herkules) built before World War II by the Germans for Lithuania. It has engines of 1000 HP and a speed of seven or eight knots. Regularly every week this convoy traffics the route Gdynia-Leningrad. The inhabitants of Gdynia call it Kohlendieb, in memory of the caricature with which the Germans fought the 'electric current thieves' in the occupied countries during World War II.

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Poland's trade with China was as intensive in late spring 1953 as ever, Poland exporting much more than she was getting in return. On an average every second ship came back empty to Gdynia from China. The others brought mainly cotton and a very little silk and rice. In addition to strategic goods and war materiel Poland was exporting to China considerable quantities of pig iron, iron piping, bicycles, spades, steel and other metal wire, all sorts of prefabricated metal articles and rather large quantities of rubber footwear.

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## Circulation of Foreign Currency

"Dollars still circulate on the free market in Poland. They are either bought from sailors who have a foreign currency allowance or acquired semi-officially from the Baltona firm.

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LAST PAGE FOR SUBJECT: [REDACTED]

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5. "Baltona is the state-owned enterprise at which seamen may buy with their dollar allowance all sorts of things in short supply in Poland. Naturally the prices are much higher than abroad, but it is a way to obtain the commodities. Therefore, dollars are in very great demand. Sailors get about ten times more zloty for their dollars than the official rate of exchange. This means an important source of income for the seamen. In practice, the sailor either accompanies his would-be customer to the Baltona shop, where they buy together the things the customer needs, or else the sailor sends an order to Baltona entitling Mr. X to buy goods to the value of such and such a sum at Baltona on the sailor's behalf. In this case the presence of the sailor is not required.

"Another foreign currency which is well paid for in Poland is the West German Deutsche marks. While the official rate of exchange is 1 DM = 1.05 zl, the unofficial rate is 1 DM = 12 zl [date not specified].

6. "The authorities are well aware of this traffic but ignore it, as in this manner they are able to collect a lot of foreign currency which otherwise would have been spent abroad. Things have gone so far that advertisements are published in the Polish press abroad urging people to send sums in foreign currency to Baltona. Their relatives in Poland will then be entitled to purchase scarce commodities to that amount at Baltona.

7. "The 700-900 zl. which comprise the monthly wage of a fisherman are absolutely insufficient to live upon if he has a family. Only stupid men are satisfied with that sum. The rest always find ways and means to earn something extra. The cleverest and ablest earn up to 3000-4000 zl. per month if their ship fishes in foreign waters and they run into foreign harbours.

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9. "A pretty sure way to acquire some foreign money is for a fisherman not to take any proper working clothes with him on a foreign trip. In the foreign port he then says to the purser or the captain: 'See, I have nothing to wear but rags. Please give me a letter to Dalmor's representative in the harbour so that I can buy some.' [redacted] note: Dalmor is the Polish fishing cooperative which fishes on the North Sea [redacted] Members receive a special foreign currency allowance when at sea. Under the law everybody is entitled to working clothes, and the captain cannot refuse the man the required letter. With it the man goes to the Dalmor agent-who is usually a foreigner and has no clothes to sell-and says: 'I am not in such a tearing hurry about the clothes. They can wait until next time. Give me rather the money and keep 10 per cent for yourself.' The agents have never been known to refuse such a deal, and the fishermen are very pleased. Back on board they must, of course, wear the new working clothes of a comrade for a day or two. Later the matter is forgotten, and no questions are ever asked.

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10. "Another way to acquire foreign currency is to make an agreement with the motorist or engineer of a vessel. Then the engine of the ship or fishing boat breaks down and must be repaired in a foreign port, which takes several days. This works best, of course, if a certain part cannot be obtained on the spot and must be ordered from some other place. Then the waiting period is longer. Seamen and fishermen are paid a bonus in foreign currency-\$ 1.05-for every day spent in a foreign port or foreign waters. With the proceeds they buy goods for their families or for sale in Poland and can also have a good time abroad.

11. "Motor breakdowns' became so frequent on Polish fishing boats that in spring 1953 the authorities established a special 'Polish mission' (MISJA POLSKA) [redacted] to handle such incidents. The mission is headed by a Mr. (fnu) STOJACZAK and is subordinate to the Polish Consulate [redacted] For a time this mission put a brake on the motor breakdowns. But Stojaczak and the members of the mission have no objection to making a decent living too. It is said that agreements between the mission and the fishing boats are pretty frequent. But everybody is very discreet, and nothing has ever come out.

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12. "The Polish regime itself must be blamed for the above shenanigans. Formerly the fishermen had an additional source of income in the liver and roe of the cod they caught and did not cheat so much. The rules permitted them to sell liver and roe to foreign manufacturers of cod liver oil. The fishermen could lawfully keep two-thirds of the proceeds. But some time in 1952 the rules were changed: the fishermen still get two-thirds of the price paid for the liver and roe but they had to sell the stuff in Poland. This put an end to that income: nobody is prepared to do the hard work of picking out liver and roe for the few zloty they bring in the Polish harbours. Now the fishermen throw everything inside the catch overboard and invent motor breakdowns instead.
13. Inventions  
"In the general production drive in Poland today the workers are exploited as much as possible and also encouraged to introduce improvements and make inventions to increase output, cut costs and save labour. A special national commission exists to test inventions and improvements and to award premiums for them. It is called Centrala Komisja Wynalazczosci. It has its main offices in Warsaw and territorial offices in the important provincial towns, including Szczecin.
14. "Furthermore, every large enterprise has a special section-usually consisting of one so-called 'referent' and a typist-to handle submitted 'rationalization projects', as improvements and inventions are called. Most factories also have a rationalization club (Klub racjonalizatorski), which tries to promote such projects. Every factory also has its own rationalization commission, on which five or six of its most competent technicians are appointed to serve whenever required. They get a fee of 28-40 zl. per meeting. The sum varies according to the importance of the enterprise: at the Dalmor fishing enterprise it was 28 zl.
15. "If an employee of a factory-he may be an engineer, a technician or an ordinary worker-declares that he has invented something useful or has an idea how some machine or production process could be improved, the factory at its own cost provides him with an engineer and a draughtsman who help him to elaborate the idea, make the necessary calculations and draw the blueprints. The first judge of an invention or improvement is the rationalization commission of the enterprise. It decides whether the project submitted is a new invention or only an improvement. The borderline between these terms is never clearly defined and the commission has great latitude. For the inventor, however, the decision is of vital importance as the pay or premium for his invention depends entirely on this distinction. A good 'rationalization' or improvement can bring its author 4000-6000 zl; a good invention sometimes brings up to 15,000 zl.
- "The judgment of an invention depends largely on the political attitude of the inventor. Anything a CP member invents is always classified high. However, the non-Party man has a chance. He is always present at the meeting of the commission and can defend his invention. No decision can be made by the commission unless he agrees to it. If the inventor and the commission of his enterprise cannot come to an agreement, the matter goes further to the commission of the town or even to the central commission in Warsaw if necessary. Warsaw's decision is final. However, such disputes are infrequent as all inventions are favoured by state enterprises and the first commission is usually benevolent towards the inventor. In judging an invention or improvement the commissions proceed from three principles: (a) Whether the invention saves raw material; (b) Whether it saves time; and (c) Whether it increases production.
16. 25X1 [redacted] a skipper in a fishing cooperative who twice got premiums for approved rationalization proposals. The second time the award was a gold medal and a bonus of 6000 zl, for an improved fishing net now manufactured under the designation 'LT-80.' These nets are being used at present in both the Baltic and the North Seas.
17. "A Polish fisherman (fnu) DETLAF, constructed a special winch for drawing in nets. He duly submitted it in the proper form with all drawings and calculations to the rationalization committee and did not hear anything about it for several years. His invention was buried in the heaps of paper flooding all Polish government offices. However, it seems that a functionary in the rationalization office privately read Detlaf's papers and published in the fishing magazine, RYBAK, a full description of the winch with all calculations and drawings, without mentioning that it was a new invention for which a patent was being sought. The article aroused the attention of West German and Dutch fishing enterprises, who experimented with

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Detlaf's invention and improved it further. A West German fishing magazine published an article on the winch and mentioned that the first inventor had been a Polish fisherman. Only then did the Polish authorities realize that Detlaf's invention was valuable. Production of winches according to his design was started. In January 1953 the man finally got a premium of 1500 zl. for his work.

18. "New inventions in the field of fishing tackle are promoted by MORSKI INSTYTUT RYBACKI (MIR).

"The trouble with inventions is that the various commissions take a long time to examine submitted projects, sometimes up to five years. This may happen even if the invention is worth little and is returned without any award. This procrastination prevents the inventor from working for improvements, perhaps earning a premium next time. While he waits somebody may get more or less the same idea and submit a slightly better invention, which the first man might have developed if his project had been returned to him quickly.

19. "The general attitude people have towards their work in Poland today is the same as it was during the German occupation: you must have a job because the authorities insist on it and without it you are a suspect individual, but that does not mean that you take it seriously or do your best to work well. For most people, especially simple workers who never earn more than 700 zl. and often as little as 500-600 zl. [a month], the earnings from the regular job are not sufficient to live on. They must seek subsidiary sources of income. This observation does not apply fully to specialist, who are well paid and necessary in their jobs.

20. "However, the outlook of both skilled and unskilled workers is such today that nobody thinks of the future. Everybody lives for the present, somehow to feed and clothe self and family and not think of tomorrow. During the German occupation people still thought of the future; some even tried to save and build. But nobody has any hope now. There is the firm belief that no thought of the future is of any use before there has been a new war and the Soviets have been driven out.

"Hence it would never enter anybody's head to try and build up a career for himself over a number of years. To get a good job here and now-yes; but to work for one somewhere in the dim future-absolutely no. Therefore the attitude towards jobs is carelessness and negligent. Nobody would, for instance, hesitate to stay away from work if it suited him. In many cases it is more profitable not to go to the job for a few days but to work instead in one's own little garden to provide the family with a few potatoes and vegetables for the winter.

21. "The authorities fight against such habits to the best of their ability. Practically the only way to get a free day is to 'fall ill'. To stay away without a sickness certificate is regarded as tantamount to szkodnictwo (sabotage) by the authorities, i.e. sabotage against labour discipline and production.

#### Counterfeit Sickness

22. "To get a sickness certificate one must come to an agreement with a doctor. This is usually not too difficult. The doctors have the right to issue such certificates, and since 'rationalization' decreased their incomes considerably, they, too, must take certain risks in order to make some money. The doctors must be bribed. The usual way is to put a newspaper on the doctor's table with a 50-100 zl. note between its pages. Those who have contacts with foreign countries or persons who smuggle goods into Poland, put a pair of nylon stockings in an envelope and 'forget' it in the doctor's reception room. Quite often they also hand over a couple of packages of foreign cigarettes quite openly as 'greetings from abroad.' Lastly one can voluntarily add 30-40 zl. to the doctor's fee.

23. "The doctors have the right to put a person on the sick-list for six days. If he is still ill after that and cannot go back to work, they can recommend him for investigation by a commission on which they usually sit themselves. The commission in its turn can liberate a person from work for a fortnight.

24. "Every patient has extra opportunities depending on his own powers of invention. He can, for example, keep complaining of sciatica, and there is nobody who can say whether he has any or not. If, for one reason or another the commission de-

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cides not to believe the recommendation of a doctor ([redacted] no case where this has happened though the possibility exists), the patient is sent to a hospital for a thorough examination. Should he be found healthy, nothing worse happens to him than being sent back to work. Should a patient like his stay at the hospital, he can fabricate all sorts of grave symptoms for his illness, eg add a little blood from a tooth or pricked finger to his urine in the morning, and have the investigation continue a good deal longer. One of the best illnesses to simulate is rheumatism. People who can do it realistically usually manage to get quite a nice rest and holiday at a hospital with comparatively plentiful food. Of course, they must have an appropriate background: work in the open or in a harbour or on a ship.

25. "Illness does not entail any serious material losses in Poland. For the first three days one gets one's full wage and after that 75 per cent on the last three months average gross income with all the bonuses added. This sum of 75 per cent is paid not by the enterprise where one works but by the sick fund.
26. "Illness is generally regarded as an extra holiday which one tries to get if at all possible. Workers who have had to work much overtime 'fall ill' periodically. The same is done by seamen on return from a long voyage to China and by fishermen with a long fishing trip to the Arctic behind them. To some extent this explains why the Polish hospitals are so overcrowded. As a result of hard work and undernourishment the health of the Polish people is not what it was and there are more genuine patients than there ever were, but the number of simulators is not negligible.
27. "The 'sickest' days for fishermen are usually before long trips abroad during which no calls at foreign ports are scheduled. Seamen and fishermen get an extra bonus in foreign currency on long voyages, with which they can buy goods in foreign harbours. For this reason it is easy to collect crews for eg, catching herring, which is done on the North Sea up to Iceland, with ample opportunities for illicit trade. However, it is always very difficult to muster a crew on a vessel going to fish around the north coast of the USSR. As soon as they hear of such a project fishermen and seamen fall ill right and left. In May 1953 a few ships put out to fish in Soviet waters. To fill the great gaps in their crews untrained dockers direct from the street had to be engaged as no trained people were available.

#### Availability of Penicillin

28. "One gram of penicillin manufactured in Poland costs up to 180 zl on the free market. Polish penicillin is red and its injection causes irritation and pain.
29. "Foreign penicillin in crystal form costs 200-300 zl the gram. The foreign liquid (or oily) form costs 400 zl the gram.

#### Resistance Activity

30. "Although eight years of Communist regime have necessarily dampened resistance activities in Poland, they have not died out. Every now and then one hears of anti-regime acts committed by partisans.
31. "At the beginning of November 1952, three political prisoners who were being transported from one prison to another were liberated by partisans in the Poznan province, three kilometres from Sroda in the Starogard direction. The prisoners told their liberators that the person responsible for their arrest was a certain militia corporal. Fearing that the partisans would take vengeance on this corporal the authorities transferred him from Poznan to Gdynia. On 13 November 52 an ambush was arranged for him by night at Oburze, a suburb of Gdynia. It was known that he had to take this way every night between 11 and 12 pm on the road passing the Paget company barracks. A man in a militia uniform came along this road at the appointed time. The men detailed to liquidate him carried no arms. They asked him for a match, overpowered him, strangled him and buried the body in a hole close to a school nearby. A few days later they discovered they had killed the wrong man. In mid February 1953 they took with them a man who knew the corporal and asked the latter to a restaurant. After a lot of drinking the party went on to the corporal's flat, where they took his own gun and killed him with three shots. They left the flat, locking it and the house with the corporal's keys. It was 8 am by that time. They took a bus to the station and boarded a train to Gdansk.

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In the meantime the corporal's landlady had got out of the house and alerted the police, who raided the railway stations at Gdynia and Gdansk. At Gdansk the police undertook a general control of documents and even asked the partisans for theirs, as they had just got off the train. Instead of producing their papers the men drew the pistols which they had taken from the corporal and started to shoot, killing two policemen and a railwayman who tried to help the police. One of the partisans, a young man from Warsaw, was wounded and shot himself. His two comrades ran out through a side door and sprinted for the ruins nearby. The whole block was surrounded by militia and UB-men for three days. They combed the area carefully, but the partisans had vanished.

"In October 1952 some unknown men organized a raid on the kindergarten school (szkolka) at Olsze, Gdynia. They took the pictures of Bierut and other wartime Communist leaders from the wall and tore them into small pieces. They hurt nobody but took the school radio with them. These raiders were never caught.

"In 1951 ULICA BOZMANSKA in Gdynia was renamed ULICA WINCENTEGO GRULA in honour of a Communist of that name who was killed in 1948 by a resistance group on Gdynia's viaduct. Five times since the nameplate of this street has been removed from the building of the police station on that street, and from the other corners. The authorities have to set up new nameplates continually. Such small incidents have become frequent since the death of Stalin.

25X1 [REDACTED] the titles of films shown at the Soviet film festival in Gdynia are popularly used as pet names for various officials or situations:  
 'The Ace of the Secret Service' - 'AS WYWIADU' = Chief of the cadres department  
 'Nobody Knows Anything' - 'NIKT NIC NIE WE' (a Czech movie) = The accounts department.  
 'Breakneck Jump' - 'KARKOLONY SKOK' = Jammed buses or other means of public transportation."

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